

VZCZCXRO2026
RR RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHYG
DE RUEHNT #0629/01 1571230
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 051230Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9747
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0163
RUEHAB/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4015
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0228
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4630
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0501
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0416
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0512
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2515
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0540
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1175
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0180
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000629

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL ANDREW BUHLER; G/TIP FOR MEGAN HALL; SCA/RA
FOR JESSICA MAZZONE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-TIP MOMENTUM CONTINUES WITH WORKSHOP IN
TASHKENT

REF: TASHKENT 580

¶1. (U) Summary: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Central Asia sponsored an anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) workshop on May 30-31 in Tashkent, following up on a UNODC anti-TIP workshop co-sponsored with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on May 14-15. Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials provided few additional details regarding their implementation efforts, but significant GOU participation suggests continuing momentum on anti-TIP issues following the passage of national anti-TIP legislation in April. Continuing efforts to promulgate related criminal code amendments and a national anti-TIP action plan will provide important benchmarks against which to assess more fully the GOU's anti-TIP commitments over the coming months. End Summary.

¶2. (U) UNODC sponsored a workshop on May 30-31 in Tashkent on "Countering Human Trafficking in the Republic of Uzbekistan." GOU law enforcement and legislative officials, NGO representatives, international organization officials, and diplomats attended the two-day workshop. GOU attendees included representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Justice Ministry, the Prosecutor-General's Office, the National Security Service, the Legislative Chamber of the Supreme Assembly (the lower house of parliament), the Supreme Court, and the National Center for Human Rights. This workshop came on the heels of a high profile international conference in Tashkent organized jointly by UNODC and OSCE on May 14-15 entitled "Promoting Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation Among Source, Transit, and Destination Countries to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling to and from Central Asia." The most recent workshop provided participants with an opportunity to look more specifically at anti-TIP activities in Uzbekistan.

Criminal Code Amendments Still Pending

13. (U) GOU officials revealed little new information about anticipated anti-TIP criminal code amendments or a national action plan to implement Uzbekistan's new law on countering human trafficking that was enacted on April 17, 2008 (reftel). Mr. A.U. Asomov, Senior Prosecutor in the Office of the Prosecutor General, said in his presentation that GOU agencies continue to work collaboratively to draft criminal code amendments that will strengthen the legal basis for investigating and prosecuting TIP-related crimes, and he noted that draft amendments were in their "final stages." Another GOU official noted that an inter-agency committee has been tasked with drafting a national anti-TIP action plan; President Karimov, however, has yet to propose an official to head that committee.

14. (U) Much of the discussion on the need for additional anti-TIP amendments focused on the legal liability of human trafficking victims. A number of attendees expressed concern that repatriated victims might still be liable for criminal or administrative penalties for "illicit border crossings" and other illegal migration charges, noting that such liability would deter trafficking victims from coming forward and revealing their exploiters. Although GOU officials explained that it has been their practice to exempt trafficking victims from liability, one attendee referred to a specific case in which a victim had been charged with illegal migration. Noting that victim exemption from liability will help them carry out effective anti-TIP investigations, GOU officials indicated that a provision to exempt victims from legal liability would be included in the draft criminal code amendments. (Comment: It was unclear whether the draft already contained an exemption provision or whether the remarks reflected GOU intent to amend the draft further.) GOU officials also recognized that greater efforts needed to be made to raise public awareness of this exemption.

GOU Officials Reveal Limited Details on Anti-TIP Activities

14. (U) During his presentation, Asomov also provided data on recent GOU anti-TIP activities. For 2006, he reported that GOU agencies opened 165 TIP-related criminal cases involving 515 victims (380 women and 135 men), with 168 people charged with TIP-related crimes. In 2007, GOU agencies reportedly filed charges against 330 individuals in 385 TIP-related criminal cases involving 1,023 victims (800 men, 223 women). (Comment: These statistics reflect GOU officials' comments that labor exploitation is a growing problem vis-a-vis trafficking related to sexual exploitation.)

15. (U) GOU officials also provided further details on implementation of the April 2008 anti-TIP legislation. Nodir Kurbanov, Senior Investigative Office of MVD's special anti-TIP unit, said in his presentation that his unit remains the primary investigative body for anti-TIP crimes in Uzbekistan. He noted that MVD works closely with local law enforcement officials to investigate TIP-related crimes and conducts nine regional seminars annually with local law enforcement agencies to exchange experiences and best practices. According to Kurbanov, collecting information on traffickers and creating a TIP database are among MVD's greatest challenges to implementing national anti-TIP laws.

16. (U) While GOU officials offered few new details on plans to establish a national rehabilitation center for repatriated TIP victims, Kurbanov noted that the Uzbek NGO Istiqbolli Avlod (IA) will assist MVD with the physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims. Kurbanov emphasized that MVD has a very good relationship with IA (reftel). National Security Service (NSS) representative N.E. Khodjaev said that the NSS, which includes the Border Guards, will also play a significant role in GOU anti-TIP activities, particularly as they relate to organized crime.

Khodjaev noted that travel and labor agencies often provide cover for illegal trafficking activities in Uzbekistan and remain significant targets of NSS anti-TIP operations.

Comment

17. (SBU) Coming on the heels of the larger May 14-15 anti-TIP workshop co-sponsored by UNODC and OSCE, significant GOU participation in the May 30-31 UNODC workshop suggests continuing momentum on human trafficking matters following the passage of national anti-TIP legislation in April. NGO participation at the conference, particularly that of Istiqbolli Avlod, reinforces our earlier perception that TIP issues may be one of the few bright spots for GOU-NGO cooperation (reftel). GOU-provided figures also indicate a significant increase in anti-TIP investigations and prosecutions over 2006-2007, suggesting a growing interest in countering human trafficking. In the coming months, progress on related criminal code amendments and a national anti-TIP action plan will provide additional opportunities to assess GOU commitment to this issue.

NORLAND